

## NEWS



## LETTER

A Research Center for Turf and Field Sports,  
their History and Social Significance

Middleburg, Virginia 22117

June, 1980

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No. 10

## EARLY HOUND RACES

*Alexander Mackay-Smith*

One of the most entertaining features of the Rappahannock Hunt (Virginia) Point-to-Point Meeting each March after the horse races, is a hound race for a money prize following a drag so laid that virtually all of it is visible to the spectators. Other race meetings have similar races. For these there is much precedent.

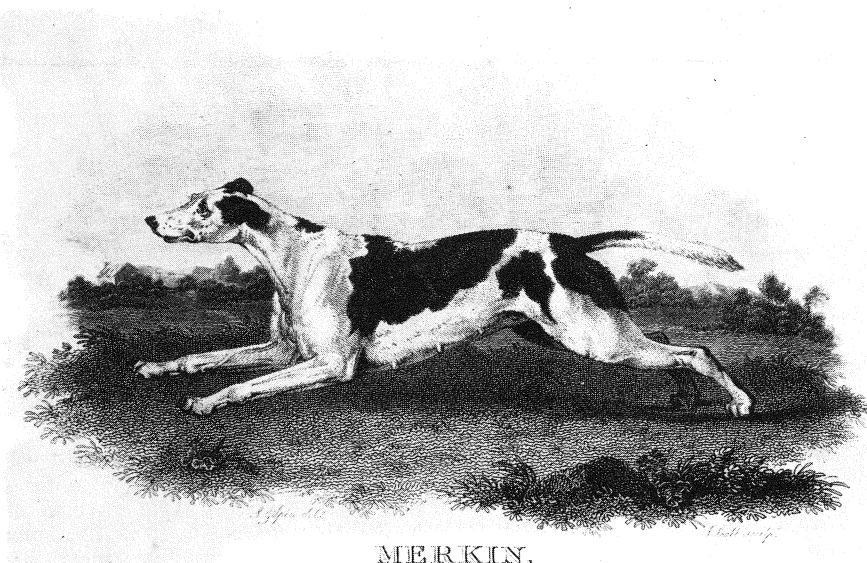
It was Charles II, King of England after re-assuming the throne in 1660, who established horse racing in the modern manner at Newmarket, still one of the world's great racing centers. Local meetings followed including Woodstock Park, about 8 miles northwest of Oxford, whose programs were printed in the *London Gazette*. For example the issue of April 14, 1681 announced the "Woodstock Plate being about 40 pound price will be Run for on Wednesday the 4th of May next, every horse carrying Ten Stone (140 lbs), three Heats; and on the Friday following another Plate, about 30 pound price, will be Run for there by Horses carrying fifteen Stone (210 lbs.), one Heat only." Considering the fact that the horses of that era averaged 14 hands this was quite an impost! The notice continues: "There will be also a Plate given for Hounds running a Trail-scent (drag) of four Miles, for which any Gentleman may put in a hound." The issue of April 10, 1682 announced a "Trail Scent for Hounds" and that of Aug. 21, 1684 "two Plates run for hounds the Four Miles Course, the one of 10 pound, the of 5 pound price, while that of Aug. 19, 1686 said simply: "There will be a Dog-Plate Run for each day."

The hounds of the 1680's were either stag hounds or harriers, since foxhunting with running hounds was then only just beginning. A century later, when Hugo Meynell, second Master (1753-1800) of the Quorn, was establishing Leicestershire as the most fashionable of all hunting countries, the speed of foxhounds became the subject of more matches. The Hon. J.H. Smith-Barry, founder and Master (1763-1784) of the Cheshire Hunt, provided

the opposition. In his "Correct Delineation of the Horse and Dog" (London, 1820) John Scott wrote: - Mrs. Meynell matched two Fox Hounds, Richmond and a Bitch (his daughter Rarity) against Mr. Barry's two hounds, Bluecap and Wanton, to run over the Beacon Course at Newmarket, for five hundred guineas. Mr. Barry's hounds were trained on Tiptree Heath, Essex, where annual Races for small prizes have been held immemorially. The trainer was Will Crane, long-famed in that Quarter as a Huntsman, and who kept Rivenhall Inn. His method with the hounds was to run a fox drag of eight or ten miles, three times a week, upon the turf, during two months, feeding upon oat-meal and milk and sheep's-trotters. Mr. Meynell's hounds were fed whilst in training entirely upon legs of mutton, and were also in high condition: odds seven to four upon them at starting, chiefly from the Proprietor's high sporting character. The match was run on the 30th of September 1773 by laying the accustomed drag from the Rubbing

House at Newmarket Town end, to the Rubbing House at the Starting Post of the Beacon Course, the four hounds being immediately laid on the scent. Mr. Barry's Bluecap came in first and his Wanton a very near second, the four miles being run by these hounds in a few seconds above eight minutes, much about the time in which an ordinary Country plate horse would run the same distance, carrying the weight of eight stone or eight stone seven pounds. Mr. Meynell's hound was beaten by about one hundred and twenty yards, and the bitch was in no place, not running her course through. Three score Horsemen started with the hounds; and Cooper, Mr. Barry's Huntsman, was first at the Ending Post. Only twelve horses out of the sixty, were able to run in with the hounds, Will Crane, mounted upon the winner of a twelve stone or King's Plate called Rib, being the twelfth."

That theatrical sportsman Col. Thomas Thornton of Thornville Royal in Yorkshire,  
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Merkin, FL. (1795), Sawrey Gilpin.

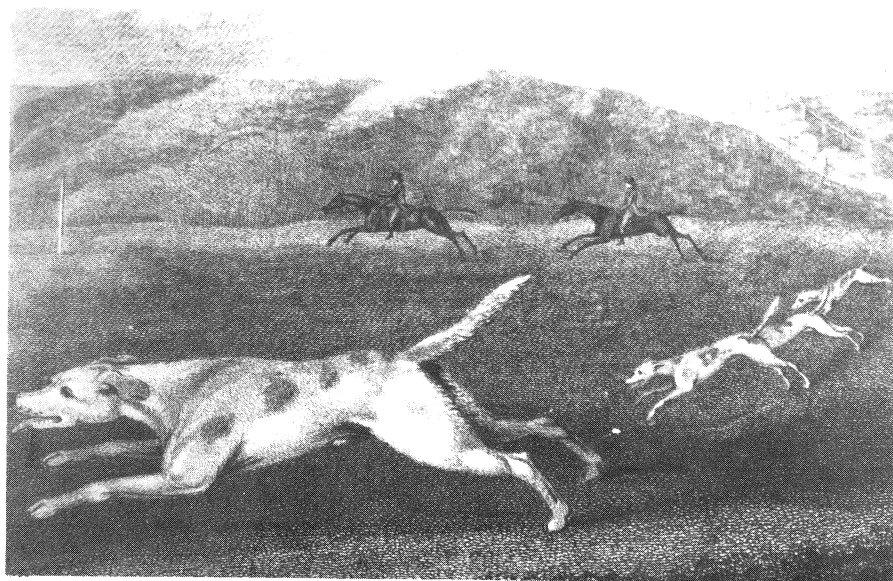
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on March 19, 1783, matched 12½ couple of his hounds against a like number from the Confederate pack of the Earl of Effington. Although the latter failed to appear, the Colonel's hounds found at 9:27 A.M. and ran the same fox until 5:14 that afternoon!

Col. Thornton next decided to beat Bluecap's record. In his "Rural Sports" (London, 1801) Rev. W.B. Daniel writes: "Madcap at two years old challenged all England for 500 guineas. Lounger, brother to Madcap, did the same at four years old; the challenge was accepted, and a Bet made for 200 guineas, to run Mr. Meynell's Pillager; the parties were also allowed by Col. Thornton to start any other hound of Mr. M.'s and Lounger was to beat both; but upon Lounger's being seen at Tattersall's by many of the first Sportmen, his Bone and Form were so capital that it was thought proper to pay forfeit, which was done by giving Col. T. a pair of Gold Couples.

"The speed of Merkin, a Foxhound Bitch bred by Colonel Thornton was still superior; she was challenged to run any Hound of her five miles over Newmarket, giving 220 yards, for 10,000 guineas or to give Madcap 100 yards, and run the same distance for 5000. Merkin had run a trial for Four miles, and the time she performed it in seven minutes and half a second. This Bitch was sold in 1795 for four Hogsheads of Claret, and the seller to have two couple of her Whelps."

First published in *The Chronicle of the Horse* July, 1973.



Hon. J. Smith Barry's Bluecap, by John Nost Sartorius, published in the *Sporting Magazine*, May, 1801.

## GIFTS TO THE LIBRARY

The Library is pleased to announce the following gifts received this past year:

From Mrs. Thomas Atkinson a copy of "A Plea for Sanity in Thoroughbred Racing";

Mr. William Brainard, additions to his ongoing gifts of the *American Kennel Club Gazette*;

Mr. Bud Brown, two volumes of "Who's Who in Thoroughbred Racing";

Donald Eismann - "Chichester Foxhunt-

ing Club - Early History";

Mr. Francis Greene, "The Piping Rock Racing Association - 1914";

Mrs. Polly Howard, a collection of old sporting magazines including *The Sportsman* and *Country Life*;

Mr. Alfred M. Hunt and The Hunt Foundation, a generous grant of funds;

Mr. Alexander Mackay-Smith, 150 early books on British Thoroughbred racing, facsimile editions of 17th and 18th century books on equitation, Muybridge's "The Horse in Motion" (1882) and books on 20th century American racing;

Mr. Thomas Marston, leather-bound scrapbooks containing early newspaper articles and clippings, letters, photographs and original material on "Grafton-Middlesex Match, Nov. 1905," "Mr. Chetland's Racehorses 1910-," and "The Middlesex Hounds, 1899-1920";

Mr. Harry T. Peters, Jr., a collection of photographs;

Mrs. Judy Richter, her latest book, "Horse & Rider, From Basics to Show Competition";

Mr. James Scharnberg, hunt buttons of Ireland, Scotland and the United States, handsomely mounted and framed;

Mr. John Barnes Todd, a two-volume set of "Dogs, Their History and Development," by Edward C. Ash;

Mr. William R. Tupper, a four-volume edition of "Portraits of Celebrated Racehorses," by Thomas Henry Taunton, London, 1887.

Mrs. Thomas Waller, 13 books on various aspects of horse breeding, racing and riding dating back to 1902, and some 50 issues of *The Sportsman*.

The Dwight W. Winkelman Foundation, a generous grant of funds.

Our deep appreciation to our Friends who have contributed so generously, enlarging the scope and enriching the quality of the Library's collections.



This print of Jacob Bates was made from a drawing by P. Nusbiegel and was published in Nurnberg, Germany, in 1766. He was reputed to have been the originator of the modern circus. Certainly his feats on horse were extraordinary. He travelled all over Europe and even to the American colonies. On September 19, 1772, Jacob Hiltzheimer of Philadelphia wrote "With my wife and children went to see Jacob Bates perform in my lot, up Market Street, different feats of horsemanship on one, two, and three horses".

# FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL SPORTING LIBRARY

The Library extends a warm welcome to the 20 new members who joined us since this time last year, and deep appreciation to those nine "Old Friends" who have increased their contributions to a higher category of membership, which we are pleased to accept as an indication of confidence as well as support.

In this regard, we wish to invite our Friends to keep in touch. Write, call, and do visit! Let us know what you are thinking. Send us your suggestions.

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## OUR LATE FRIENDS

We sadly note the passing of good  
Friends - Mrs. Donald Opstad in April,

1979, and Mr. Robert B. (Bobby) Young  
and Mr. William Grayson in April 1980.

## DUPLICATE BOOKS FOR SALE

We have compiled a list of books of  
which we have several copies, and are  
offering for sale to the Friends. This list  
may be obtained by writing to N.S.L.  
Among the items is *The Sportsman  
Magazine* running from Vol. I, No. 2,  
February, 1927 to Vol. XXII, No. 4,  
October, 1937. We do not have Volume I,  
No. 1, January, 1927 and would like to  
obtain this issue to complete our set.  
Please pass on to us any clues to its  
availability.

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The manuscript of the poem which  
follows was recently received from Betty  
Babcock, long-time Secretary of the  
Meadow Brook Hunt, Long Island, the  
privately printed facsimile editions of  
whose hunt diaries, illustrated by the  
author, are among the most sought-after  
items in American foxhunting literature.

### A Hunting Memory

1957

It's a very old house with creaky stairs  
And the hot water runs at a trickle  
And the beds are hard and the ceiling's  
cracked  
And nobody cares that it is like that,  
No more than you'd care that a grand old  
man  
Was wrinkled and fat and short of breath.  
Behind and below it the stables are  
sprawled,  
Some yellow, some green, some white, in a  
pigglety fashion.  
And rising above them the kennels stand, a  
drab dark green  
And the kennelman's house is most  
dangerously propped  
On the red clay banks of a deep washout.

The whole layout speaks of neglect and  
decay,  
But there's something comforting  
nevertheless  
To see Nature's peace and man's unrest  
Welded together.  
It's down at the heels now, house, kennels  
and stables  
And even the hounds have that raggedy  
look,  
Which poverty stamps on its own,  
But I knew this place when the paint was  
new  
The house well filled and the stables too  
And the yard was cluttered with cars and  
vans  
And the lawn was raked and the stoop was  
brushed  
And not until dawn was the revelry hushed  
So gay was the company then.  
The Master was a dour faced man  
Who rarely spoke or smiled  
Till he found his hounds around him and  
then  
His eyes would light and his voice would  
cheer  
Hounds, horses and the valley.

Hard to follow, he rode so straight  
He stayed with hounds whatever the rate  
Of pace they set, and could lift and cast  
them  
With the sure instinct of a great huntsman.  
He was not rich, this sad faced Master,  
But the sport he gave with his fine pack  
Swelled the field and there was no lack  
Of support in those good days.  
He is gone, some years now, replaced by  
one  
Turned out to perfection, protecting his  
person  
By riding the easy line.  
Knowing no hound by name, mounting his  
staff  
On old creaks or half mad young brutes,  
But ever ready with the finest of salutes  
For the pretty girls.  
For the memory of happy days a few of us  
return  
Each year for a short while,  
Seeing, when hounds are in full cry, that  
lovely smile  
Of one we loved and who brought honor to  
the name  
Of Master.